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ABSTRACT

Employer-sponsored career development programs can be a vital force for increasing productivity, reducing employee turnover, and insuring that an organization has a pool of motivated employees from which to draw new talent. However, none of these benefits can occur unless organizations undertake initiation of career development programs according to well-thought out principles. The inception of a career development program is its most fragile and necessary component. New programs should be thoroughly researched, and those responsible for originating a program should study the evolving program for as long as necessary. Determining the functions, philosophy, and goals of the program at the outset is essential. A carefully chosen advocacy committee can serve to enhance the political survival of the program, answer questions, and function as a sounding board. Needs assessment, the offer of training and support to managers responsible for delivering career development services, and linking a new program with an older one are good ways to ensure the success of a new program. An excellent way to incorporate career development activities into existing human resource development activities is to use at least one career development activity during performance appraisals or salary reviews. (MN)

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Survival Tactics for Implementing Organizational Career Development

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Running head: IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

There is much discourse among human resource development professionals about offsetting emphasis on cool technology with more warm concern for the careers of employees. This concern results in hastily conceived career development programs. Problems with career development programs abound in many organizations. The article's purpose, drawing on personal observation and principles suggested in the literature, is to enhance the survival of new career development programs. The conclusion is made that practitioners willing to apply relatively simple principles can implement programs that enhance both employee and company development.

Introduction

Why offer career development as a part of human resource development in organizations? There are several trends occurring in today's organizational climate that lead to an answer to this question. Among these trends is that employees are expressing an interest in career development programs (Bolyard, 1981). Not only are employees expressing interest , but many personnel professionals agree that the typical employee is no longer loyal to the company. People see personal competence or individual qualifications as keys to career growth. Because of this, the organization's needs are often sacrificed to personal ambition. Another trend in organizational climate is one that Naisbett (1981) labels as "high touch". In order to offset the effects of cold computer technological emphasis, he has noted a trend towards providing employees with personal attention to enhance their loyalty and performance. Career development programs, most often focusing on the individual employee, offer a "high touch" focus. Programs for employee career development directly communicate a caring attitude to the employee. Inherent in this attitude is a belief in grooming, developing, and ultimately retaining that employee. Companies that have operative career development programs seem to be seeking a higher degree of loyalty from employees. One way they are attempting to guarantee loyalty is by offering the worker known career options within the company. Employees who believe they have options are more likely

to be loyal than are those who see little opportunity for growth in their present jobs. However, despite the apparent benefits, problems exist for career development programs in far too many organizations.

The Problem

A recruiter for a large corporation recently told me about a problem he was experiencing with employee loyalty. Employees were leaving the corporation, a leader in the field of hospital management, because they perceived limited opportunities for career growth. The company attempted to establish a career development program but later abandoned it. Another large corporation developed a beautiful set of plans for a new career development program. Then the company acquired a large conglomerate of additional retail stores and, distracted, aborted the attempt to offer its employees career development activities. A third example is that of a large university, which carried out a career development program for its employees, numbering in the thousands. The typical employee targeted for this program was the hourly worker in a semiskilled job. The program originated well and was successful in offering workers career path options and career planning workshops. Due to the large demand for services, the Career Development Advocate, highly trained but faced with a lack of support staff, became misemployed as a facilitator for employees requesting transfers. The university abandoned the program.

In analyzing these examples, it is obvious that problems with career development programs exist. Organizations seem to be unclear as to who within the company is responsible for employee career development. There is a lack of nomenclature that is agreed upon in advance. Included in that lack of nomenclature is failure to identify terms; failure to state clearly what these terms mean. This leads to organizations that inefficiently use or misuse career development programs. Leibowitz, Farren and Kaye (1983) pointed out that it is vital for the survival of career development programs to integrate them into already existing Humam Resource Development activities. Companies do not appropriately visualize how to accomplish the integration, thus we see that organizations typically begin career development programs without clearly defined goals. Responsibilities are, in too many cases, not spelled out. This practice leads to a greater likelihood that career development personnel will be assigned "make-work" tasks, resulting in misused talents and underemployment. Further, organizations are inefficiently practicing advocacy for the career development function. The advocacy activities are diluted with fuzzy organizational goals. Program directors without assigned tasks can hardly be expected to advocate effectively for programs they may not understand. This contributes to a scenario which happens too often. In this scenario, management becomes discouraged and provides itself with a perfect out. The scenario begins as management, with good

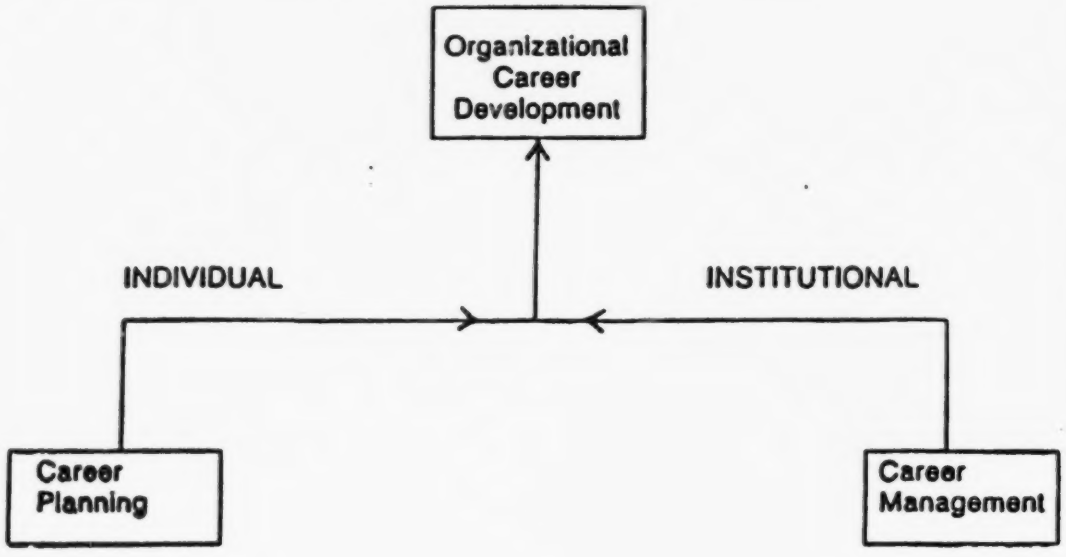
intent, establishes hastily designed programs with career development labels. The scenario continues with the previously mentioned problems of lack of nomenclature, lack of integration with established programs, and inefficient use of advocacy and career development personnel. Add to the scenario a lack of clearly defined goals for the career development specialist, the organization, and the manager or the employee and you have the perfect out -- "We tried career development - and it didn't work".

Survival Tactics -- Some principles that should help.

Career development can be a vital force for increased productivity, for reduction of employee turnover, and for insuring that the organization has a pool of motivated employees from which to draw new talent. However, none of these benefits can occur unless organizations undertake initiation of career development activities according to well thought out principles.

These principles revolve around the inception - the most fragile and necessary component - of any career development program. New programs must be thoroughly researched and terms established for referring to the programs. First, those responsible for originating it should study the evolving career development program for as long as necessary. From the outset, consistent use of terms for referring to the career development program is essential. Gutteridge and Otte (1983) proposed a model for organizational career development that provides an apt nomenclature. (Insert Figure 1 about here)

Figure 1.
A Working Model of
Organizational Career Development



Sub Processes
- Occupational Choice
- Organizational Choice
- Choice of Job Assignment
- Career Self-Development

Sub Processes
- Recruitment and Selection
- Human Resource Allocation
- Appraisal and Evaluation
- Training and Development

A. Career: The sequence of a person's work-related activities and behaviors and associated attitudes, values and aspirations over the span of one's life.
B. Organizational Career Development: The outcomes emanating from the interaction of individual career planning and institutional career management processes.
C. Career Planning: A deliberate process for: becoming aware of self, opportunities, constraints, choices and consequences; identifying career-related goals; and programming work, education and related developmental experiences to provide the direction, timing and sequence of steps to attain a specific career goal.
D. Career Management: An ongoing process of preparing, implementing and monitoring career plans undertaken by the individual alone or in concert with the organization's career systems.

Gutteridge, T. G. and Otte, F. L.
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Determining the functions, philosophy and goals of the program at its inception is essential. Brim-Donohoe (1978) stressed the importance of this step for any new human resource development program. For career development programs, which are apt to be fraught with misconception, this step remains extremely important. A possible facilitative method for determining the functions, goals, and philosophies of the career development program is to design an advocacy committee. Representatives from each department within the company or university should be chosen, preferably individuals who have expressed an interest in career development.

A carefully chosen advocacy committee can serve to enhance the political survival of the program, answer questions and serve as a sounding board. An orientation for the advocacy committee should be scheduled. The orientation would ideally serve to identify what Liebowitz et. al (1983) refer to as "key players". Key players are defined as ... "those people who will be affected by or who need to be involved in what you're doing" (p. 18). A second purpose for the orientation program is to clarify career development goals and to gain the commitment of the key players in the organization. A technique I refer to as the Camelot Factor would be useful in clarifying goals and gaining the commitment of the key players in the advocacy committee. Very simply, one asks the key player to list on one half of a piece of paper "What I/or my department would be willing to do for the

Career Development Program" and on the other half, "What the Career Development Program would or could do for my department". This idea stems from the Kennedy administration's fondly remembered Camelot period in which the late president, embarking on a new age of optimism, stated "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask instead what you can do for your country". It can readily be seen that increased clarity can be gained from using the Camelot Factor regarding the roles and functions of the department manager, the employees and the organization itself. A second benefit that can result from using the Camelot Factor is that of enthusiasm for the program. Because benefits are translated into pen and paper reality, key players become aware of what career development programs can do for them or for their individual departments within the organization.

A vital principle to be applied at the outset of the career development program is the principle of needs assessment. Liebowitz, et. al. (1983) offer an excellent assessment model specifically designed for the career development function. Practitioners are encouraged to examine the models for needs assessment, to put the models into effect, and to modify them as necessary for use in various settings. Needs assessment for career development, as described by Liebowitz et. al. (1983), involves the identification of key problems, needs and opportunities. There are commercial materials available to assist in this process. Through engaging in the process for

assessing needs it is possible to assess how the career development effort is perceived by employees and managers and to correct misconceptions at the outset.

Another principle to assist in properly devising new career development programs is to offer training and support to managers responsible for delivering career development services. Training for service-delivering managers should include an orientation program in which the managers examine their own careers. Montana (1979) instituted a career planning program for the U.S. Department of Labor. After choosing to target Government Service Grades of 16-18, the voluntary participants attended workshops to familiarize themselves with career development exercises and activities. One outcome of attendance was the development of individual career plans. Workshop participants were then asked to discuss their personal career goals with their immediate supervisors. An excellent result was, then, to keep the next level of management abreast of the career development program as it was introduced.

A congruent principle to aid in beginning new programs is to tie them in to older ones. Career development activities have a better chance of survival if they are incorporated into the existing human resource development activities. One superb way of doing this is to utilize at least one career development activity during performance appraisal or salary review. This activity could be very simple, designed to serve as a

biographical sketch of an employee's work history and educational/job accomplishments, or it could be more complex, depending upon the needs of the company. Montana's (1979) article provides an excellent example of a simple technique which may be modified for use within an existing performance appraisal system. The use of an individual career plan form similar to Montana's (1979) example would include a statement of both long and short range career goals. The employee is asked to indicate career goals concisely and to estimate a date by which he/she expects to achieve the goals. Preparatory needs for achieving the goals are specified, as are necessary resources for goal accomplishment. It can readily be seen that an advantage of incorporating this type of activity is to sharpen the future planning capabilities of the training department. Other facts to collect at the time of the performance appraisal are whether or not the employee is willing to relocate, and skills that he/she feels are not being presently utilized to full potential.

Conclusion

The relatively simple principles described in this article are based on common sense and sound behavioral science ideology. Organizations can reap benefits of increased employee loyalty, less turnover and better use of employee skills by applying the principles.

Career development is becoming an increasingly common buzzword in human resource development. It is important for

professionals to step back, move more thoughtfully, and to channel enthusiasms towards productivity rather that activity for its own sake. If professionals responsible for implementing programs in Career Development can meet this challenge, they can be a vital force for necessary innovation in institutional career management.

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